



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

[FR ID: 52488]

Privacy Act of 1974; Matching Program

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Notice of a new matching program.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (“Privacy Act”), this document announces the establishment of a computer matching program the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission” or “Agency”) and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) will conduct with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (Department). The purpose of this matching program is to verify the eligibility of applicants to and subscribers of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which is administered by USAC under the direction of the FCC, or other federal programs that use qualification for the FCC’s Lifeline Program as an eligibility criterion. More information about this program is provided in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section below.

DATES: Written comments are due on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. This computer matching program will commence on [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], and will conclude 18 months after becoming effective.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to Margaret Drake, FCC, 45 L Street NE, Washington, DC 20554, or to Privacy@fcc.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Margaret Drake at 202-417-1707 or Privacy@fcc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP) was established by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, Pub. L. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182. EBBP is a program that helps low-income Americans obtain discounted broadband service and one-time co-pay for a connected device (laptop, desktop computer or tablet). This program was created specifically to assist American families’ access to broadband, which has proven to be essential for work,

school, and healthcare during the public health emergency that exists as a result of COVID-19. A household may qualify for the EBBP benefit under various criteria, including an individual qualifying for the FCC's Lifeline program.

In a Report and Order adopted on March 31, 2016 (81 FR 33026, May 24, 2016) (*2016 Lifeline Modernization Order*), the Commission ordered USAC to create a National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier ("National Verifier"), including the National Lifeline Eligibility Database (LED), that would match data about Lifeline applicants and subscribers with other data sources to verify the eligibility of an applicant or subscriber. The Commission found that the National Verifier would reduce compliance costs for Lifeline service providers, improve service for Lifeline subscribers, and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the program. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 directs the FCC to leverage the National Verifier to verify applicants' eligibility for EBBP. The purpose of this matching program is to verify the eligibility of EBBP applicants and subscribers by determining whether they receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits administered by the North Carolina Department. Under FCC rules, consumers receiving these benefits qualify for Lifeline discounts and also for EBBP benefits.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (Department)

AUTHORITY FOR CONDUCTING THE MATCHING PROGRAM:

Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, Pub. L. 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182; 47 CFR part 54, subparts E, P; Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization, *et al.*, Third Report and Order, Further Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration, 31 FCC Rcd 3962, 4006-21, paras. 126-66 (2016) (*2016 Lifeline Modernization Order*).

PURPOSE(S):

In the 2016 Lifeline Modernization Order, the FCC required USAC to develop and operate the National Verifier to improve efficiency and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the Lifeline program. The stated purpose of the National Verifier is "to increase the integrity and improve the performance of the Lifeline program for the benefit of a variety of Lifeline participants, including Lifeline providers, subscribers, states, community-based organizations, USAC, and the Commission." 31 FCC Rcd 3962, 4006, para. 126. To help determine whether Lifeline applicants and subscribers are eligible for Lifeline benefits, the

Order contemplates that the USAC-operated LED will communicate with information systems and databases operated by other Federal and State agencies. Id. at 4011-2, paras. 135-7.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 directs the FCC to leverage the National Verifier to verify applicants' eligibility for EBBP. The purpose of this matching program is to verify the eligibility of EBBP applicants and subscribers by determining whether they receive SNAP benefits administered by the North Carolina Department. Under FCC rules, consumers receiving these benefits qualify for Lifeline discounts and also for EBBP benefits.

CATEGORIES OF INDIVIDUALS:

The categories of individuals whose information is involved in the matching program include, but are not limited to, those individuals who have applied for EBBP benefits; are currently receiving benefits; are individuals who enable another individual in their household to qualify for EBBP benefits; are minors whose status qualifies a parent or guardian for EBBP benefits; or are individuals who have received EBBP benefits.

CATEGORIES OF RECORDS:

The categories of records involved in the matching program include, but are not limited to first and last name, date of birth and the last four digits of the applicant's Social Security Number. The National Verifier will transfer these data elements to the North Carolina Department, which will respond either "yes" or "no" that the individual is enrolled in an EBBP-qualifying assistance program: State of North Carolina's SNAP.

SYSTEM(S) OF RECORDS:

The USAC records shared as part of this matching program reside in the EBBP system of records, FCC/WCB-3, Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, which was published in the **Federal Register** at 86 FR 11523 (Feb. 25, 2021).

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION.

Marlene Dortch,
Secretary.